

DCI BRIEFING

16 May 1961

LATIN AMERICAN REACTION TO CUBAN DEVELOPMENTS

- I. Mid-April events in Cuba generated great interest in other Latin American countries; preexisting attitudes of various groups somewhat intensified, but no significant shift in opinion on Castro problem yet discernible.
 - A. However, Castro's May Day speech, in which he called his regime "socialist" viewed by many Latin Americans as open proclamation of Cuba's membership in Bloc and has led some governments more seriously to consider counteraction.
 1. Latin American press comment on police state controls and on Communist hold on Cuba has shown marked increase and is contributing to growing public awareness of threat.
 - B. On 24 April, Honduras became eighth Latin American government (of a total of 19 Latin American governments) to sever relations with Castro regime.
 1. The Costa Rican government appears on verge of breaking relations and is under strong domestic pressure to do so.
 2. Previously, El Salvador, Peru, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Haiti, and Dominican Republic had broken with Cuba--all but El Salvador prior to the US break last January.
 - C. Of the eight that have broken relations, all but Dominican Republic can be counted on to support strong multilateral anti-Castro action.

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1. In addition, Costa Rica and Panama would probably back such action.
 2. Argentine, Venezuelan, and Colombian governments--all strongly anti-Castro--are cautiously but actively seeking an anti-Castro formula that would have support of other key governments. Bolivia and Uruguay would probably back such a solution.
 3. The "hard core" reluctant to act against Castro consists of key countries of Mexico, Brazil, and Chile, as well as Ecuador.
 4. Ecuadorean President Velasco, who heads the Latin American government most favorably disposed to Castro, fired his pro-US foreign minister on 10 May over the latter's anti-Castro stand and replaced him with a man amenable to Velasco's policies.
- D. Communist and other pro-Castro groups in Latin America launched anti-US demonstrations in a number of countries immediately following 17 April landings.
1. But demonstrations, though in some instances violent, in no case seriously threatened public order and were, in general, less formidable than predicted by Castroites.
- E. Cuban "good will mission" currently planning to visit key Latin American countries presumably in attempt to block US efforts for OAS action on Cuba.
- II. While most Latin American governments now ready to consent to a meeting of the OAS ambassadors on the Cuban problem, they are divided on what to do at such a meeting and feel restrained from any decisive action by four basic considerations:

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A. First, many of them fear adverse domestic reactions by leftist and pro-Castro groups.

1. However, failure of pro-Castro demonstrations last month to reach serious proportions may have dissipated some of this fear.

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B. Secondly, the principle of non-intervention in another state's affairs arouses considerable support from Latin American governments and is regarded by many as keystone of inter-American system.

1. This attitude particularly strong in Mexico where it is most tenaciously held to when it involved US.
2. Nevertheless, sentiment is growing in such important countries as Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina and others that principle of non-intervention should not tie hemisphere hands in stopping Sino-Soviet intervention in Cuba.
3. Costa Rican President Echandi publicly described principle of non-intervention as outdated and harmful.

C. Thirdly, certain Latin American leaders dislike being labelled as outstandingly cooperative with the United States.

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2. Chile dislikes to be in a bloc with the smaller Latin Americans, prefers to have at least two of the three big Latin American countries on its side.
 3. Even the strongly anti-Castro Honduran ambassador stressed that any policy on Cuba should have support of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico because such support would influence the smaller Latin Americans.
- D. Fourthly, many governments fear that public airing of differences at an OAS meeting would gravely weaken inter-American system and do more harm than good.
1. Even officials of those governments not completely defeatist on issue, for instance Argentine and Uruguayan, warn that, to avoid a fiasco any OAS meeting must be preceeded by thorough preparation so that it is directed toward a specific goal and that there is prior agreement on major issues.
- E. If given a choice, most Latin American governments would prefer to evade all responsibility for any anti-Castro action.

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